

Anarchy and the Punk Movement Talking with the "squeegee kids"

After Spike and Mimi consoled Candy and we had all shared a couple of bran muffins and coffee, we discussed the punk movement. "Why is anarchy so appealing to you? You all have the anarchy symbol -- rings, necklaces with the symbol ..." The anarchy symbol is a capital A enclosed by a circle.

"The capitalist system sucks," Flint said. "Some have big money -- others have nothing. I always share my food with others ... I have no social insurance number, no hospital card, because I don't want to just be another number of the government -- they just want to control you, not because they care either." Spike pulled his squeegee out of its home-made holster and displayed the anarchy symbol carved into it. The others showed necklaces and rings displaying the symbol.

"What is the appeal of it?"

"No rules," Flint answered. "Don't mess with the other guy, and he won't mess with you."

"We say what people think, but are afraid to say," Candy added.

"In France and Britain people create riots because they are not afraid to speak up, like they are here," Flint said.

"People are afraid that what they think may not be acceptable -- so they keep silent, they're cowards," Mimi said.

"We're real punks, not phony ones," Flint said.

"Phony punks don't have our philosophy, they're 'weekend punks', or 'fair-weather punks', they live out in the suburbs in middle-class homes. They talk about money and fashions, the latest trends, -- real punks are revolutionaries."

"and it's not a political party, it's a movement," Candy said, "You can be Korean or Chinese or French Canadian, whatever, it's universal too."

Real punks aren't racist either. We don't get along with 'white power' people at all, we fight with them, we believe in freedom of religion and freedom of expression ... that's what we're all about," Flint said.

We Have No Future

"We plan to make enough money squeegeeing to go on to Vancouver," Flint said.

"Yes, before the by-law starts," Mimi adds.

"They're already harassing us," Candy said, "The police and those, those ... Ambba..ammad.. She had trouble pronouncing the English name."

"Bastards," Mimi squeals with laughter.



BY RODNEY GRAHAM

Everyone laughs.

"I think you mean the Business Improvement Zone, 'Watch Ambassadors' with the crimson red jackets," I said.

"You know something, what they're doing is creating refugees right here in Canada," Mimi said. "They have forced us from Montreal, where it's illegal, it's a hundred and thirty dollar fine for adults and a hundred and fifteen dollar fine for minors in Montreal -- Spike has fifty tickets. Toronto wasn't much better. What do they want? For us to disappear?"

Candy pulled a hard-cover book from her backpack -- it was a journal.

"She writes about twenty pages a day," Flint said.

"I'd like to write a book eventually," she said.

"Hey, you guys would probably like to hear a quote from Guy Vanderhaeghe's book -- The Englishman's Boy," I didn't wait for an answer ...

"Was a time a man in this country could go anywhere on God's green earth it pleased him, poor or proud. But the rich men keep putting all us dogs on the leash. Loitering laws, vagrancy law. Old man like me can land up in county jail for standing on a corner with empty pockets these days."

"That's from a guy talking in the 1920s," I said.

Flint looked thoughtful, "History repeats itself doesn't it?"

"What hopes do you have for the future, and do you have anything to add?"

"We have no future," Mimi answered.

"She's talking about a punk rock song," Flint added.

"Can you spare any change?" Candy asked. The others laughed.

Feeling nervous, and like there was something more I should do, I stood.

"Well, have you ever heard about the 'trekkers' of the 1930s who started a protest in Vancouver? A bunch of unemployed men jumped on freight trains and headed for Ottawa ... I didn't finish."

"No," Flint answered.

"Adieu, bon chance," I said. I left quickly, after shaking their hands.

It was drizzling as I boarded the number eleven Portage bus.

Damned rain, miserable damned day, I thought. It always makes me think of Vancouver.

This was part two of Rodney Graham's personal account of his relationship with Canada's Squeegee kids. The final part will run in next month's issue.

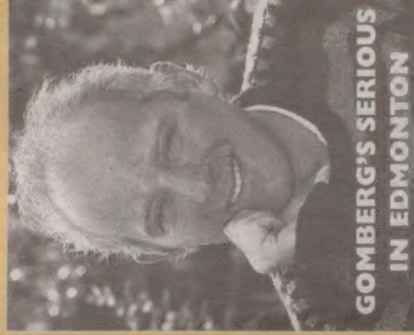


Our Voice the spare change magazine

VOTES
Plebiscite on addiction?



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See stories pages 6 and 7

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Publishers:
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Managing Editor
Michael Walters

Design and Production
Keith Wiley

**428-4001 in
Edmonton**

1-888-428-4001

**Editorial Offices and
Edmonton Distribution at:**
Bissell Centre
10527-96 Street • Edmonton •
T5H 2H6
Phone: 428-4001 • Fax: 497-7077

Calgary Our Voice Office
Phone: 508-9050 Fax: 508-9051

Office at the Calgary Native
Friendship Centre • 140-2nd
Avenue SW • Calgary, AB •
T2P 0B9

EMAIL:
sparechg@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca

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VLT

Subtle seduction of my senses



BY TAMARA

Bright red, yellow and blue colours flash on a black back-
ground, revealing a sample of games I could play. It was
the innocent entertainment machine we know as the VLT.
Little did I realize the nightmare I was about to enter as I
dropped my first quarter into the slot. That was in the fall of 1993
more than five years ago.

Two years ago, the black sky that cried rain as I drove home was
symbolic of the blackness in my mind and of the tears that rolled
down my face. The madness, the pain, the insanity, the thoughts
of suicide that filled me were unbearable. Ending my life seemed
more inviting than continuing to live. There were only two rea-
sons I would be on my way home. It was either the bar was closed
or I'd drained my bank account of it's last nickel.

Why couldn't I just stop and walk away? What was it about
those machines that made me lose control of myself and not care
about work, my relationship, friends, family or even the people
around me. Here I was, a yoga instructor, I'd studied psychology,
became a Reiki Practitioner. I was extremely creative and playful,
successful at almost everything I tried and I couldn't control my
actions or my behaviours. I was hurting people around me and I
wasn't even aware of it.

It was the extreme pain that I felt that made me stop for the
third time. I knew I had to or I wouldn't survive much longer.

I was determined to find the answers to what caused my VLT
addiction. I knew the colours on the machine had a definite affect
on how I felt emotionally, psychologically and physically. They
made me feel better, they gave me an excitement, the lights had a
calmness, a sort of soothing effect that made me feel relaxed with
what I was doing. The sounds from the VLTs, I also realized played
an important role. When the refund statement is printing out, it is

the same sound as a bank machine
statement printing out. How clever
I thought to have associated the
sound from a bank machine to give
me a false sense that I was drawing
money from my own bank account.
I also discovered that there are two
distinct sounds. Once you put the
loonie into the machine, and only
play a quarter at a time, there is one
sound and then another once the
whole loonie has been gambled. The
first tune is from Handel's Messiah
more specifically "Hal Le Lu Jah",
Handel's connotation in praise of the
Lord. Once the entire loonie is gam-
bled the tune is a piece from
Vaudeville which later came to accom-
pany building excitement in children's
cartoons.

There is still more to it. There is touch,
a basic human need. My memory of
touch was "Don't Touch That!" or
being pushed away and my dominant
memory of being touched was with a
wooden spoon, leather belt or willow
stick. If I am uncomfortable asking for
this need to be met, I was subconsciously
meeting this need by touching the
video screen.

There is a book, NLP (Neuro Linguistics
Programming) Comprehensive
(Arvada&Co.), which talks about how
the language we use affects our nervous
systems. NLP was discovered by Richard
Bandler and John Grinder who have
combined backgrounds in psychology,
linguistics and computer science. NLP is
based on our five senses and how we store
memories from our experiences. How one
accesses these memories is through one of
the visual, auditory or feel. One way to
ing to them. If their eyes go up and down
they are accessing their visual sense, side to

side they are accessing their hearing sense. If the eyes go down to
the right the dominant sense is feeling, down to the left is consid-
ered paying heed to internal dialogue.

That's it I thought. When sitting in front of the VLT the first
movement I made was to look down either to the left or right to
put my money in, accessing my feeling or my internal dialogue.
The next was to touch the screen to choose a game, again down
to the right. To play the game I had to touch a play button down
to the right. The next eye movement was to look straight ahead
accessing my auditory and when I won my eyes would look up to
the right or left depending on the game. The constant looking
down, to the middle and up was accessing my three basic senses
and literally programming my nervous system to the VLT.

Randy Adams, an executive from Anchor Gaming, a billion dol-
lar casino company that manufactures these machines stated in a
recent television interview that "Absolutely. We do a lot of
research and studying into attacking the senses. We are trying to
concentrate on audio, visual, smell, touch and feel."

This validated a theory I was working on. I wonder if our
Government and the bar owners are just as addicted to these
machines as the VLT player is? What amazes me is that the mem-
bers of the hospitality industry are fighting to keep these
machines in bars and lounges. I thought hospitality meant enter-
taining with kindness and generosity, but they don't seem to care
that I've become addicted to these machines. What is said is
"tough luck Honey! It was your choice to play." They are making
these profits at the expense of human lives. People are being
seduced, they are caught in a "conspiracy of greed, money and
power and this in our society has become more valuable than
human lives. ♦



Where "the street" meets the community

In Calgary

BY KIMBERLEY
LANGFORD FLUET

The Mustard Seed is a ministry that comprises both the church and the community and bridges Calgary's straight society with the street society.

"There has been a philosophy," explains Phil Estabrooks, the Seed's associate Director of Community Education and Resources, "that the street is street and that straight is straight and never the twain shall meet. However, it's important that all strains of society meet. One place where they can meet is within the church."

Historically the Seed has its roots in the Baptist Church, now however, it has become interdenominational. For instance, both the St. Pius V and St. Mary's churches help out by providing meal programs.

"We thank God every Sunday that St. Mary's has been doing meals," Phil stressed. "It really gives our staffers a break."

The Mustard Seed is a very impressive building. The main floor, traditionally called the living room, has a drop-in centre where the street community can relax and feel safe. This is where meals are served and where programs such as Arts and Crafts and other recreations are offered. The art program has allowed some of the participants to show and sell their work to the community.

Last year alone the Seed provided 200,655 meals. There is an emergency food supply for single moms and residents in the long-term program who are beginning to get established. The Seed store offers clothing, personal hygiene products and sleeping bags to those in need. There is a sixty bed emergency shelter with a sock exchange. Also in the works is a shower and laundry facility. Phil hopes for it to be completed by Christmas.

Speaking about the Seed's Community Education programs, Phil explains "Most of us are all beyond survival and know what it is to live, however people in the inner city are living at the survival level. For example what is it like for the person with mental illness. He might think, where will I find food today? Where am I going to sleep? Where am I going to find clothes to wear or how will I feed my addiction?"

One component of this education is the Meet the Street night which was held in both Edmonton and Calgary. It is a night long street walk. The participants are broken up into groups of three and each individual is given a scenario of person that the Seed has dealt with. The individual has to look at the street through that person's perspective.

The Seed also offers other residency programs to help people off the streets and to keep them off. As well they provide a reintegration program for people recently released from prison.

Our Voice writer Kimberley Langford Fluet will take a more intensive look into Calgary's very impressive and helpful Mustard Seed Church in coming issues. ♦

For Donations call Phil Estabrooks at 269-1319
To Volunteer call Larysa Roemer at 269-1319



The Mustard Seed Street Church

house. All items are donated.

Mustard Seed has the busiest food bank outlet in the city, giving out over one thousand hampers per month to residents of the Boyle-McCauley community. The low over the past three months was 43 hampers, with a high of 176 in one day. The last week before welfare checks come out, the food bank overflows with people. The harassed volunteer at the door has to monitor how many are allowed in at a time. The waiting room can only hold thirty people.

Ramdeo Persaud, coordinator of the food bank depot, says, "The people are unable to make it for two major reasons. We have people that are trying to get a job, and may be working only one day out of the week, and we have people unable to make it on welfare. They get a sense of belonging coming here. They can laugh a little. They are getting something to take home."

As well the Mustard Seed community chaplaincy program works with the prison system helping inmates become reestablished in the community. There are two hundred inmates released into Edmonton every month. ♦

For donations call Les Westwood at 426-5600
To volunteer call Pat Bush at 426-5600

In Edmonton

BY LINDA DUMONT

The windows of the ninety-year-old Mustard Seed Church in Edmonton are boarded up as a protective measure due to the rough inner city neighborhood. Inside, there is bustling activity.

"I want to see the Mustard Seed regain its place as being an important part of the community," said Executive Director Neil MacLean, "We're trying to get it to be a warmer, friendlier and cleaner environment."

The building has undergone extensive repairs. There is still much work needed with the goal of keeping it operational for another ten to twenty years.

At noon, people line up for a meal of soup, a bun and coffee. The week before the welfare checks are issued, the line up stretches across the room and spills onto the stairway to the front door. In 1997, eighty thousand hot meals were served.

A clothing bank upstairs offers not only clothes but housewares in the form of dishes, pots, bedding, and other small items. These are in great demand since the cutbacks of 1993, when social assistance cut back on money for setting up

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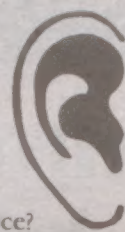
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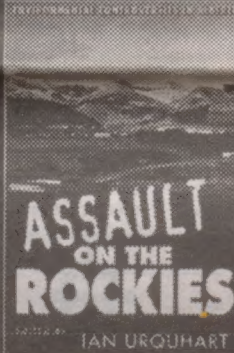
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SECOND OPINION



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She was exhausted when
she asked for help

Mother loses five children to child welfare

BY ALLISON KYDD

Lisa is a 34-year-old single mother of five children, all of whom are in foster care against her wishes. She says she has been both helped and victimized by the Child Welfare Act, depending on who was delivering the services.

There is little question that Child Welfare has the protection and well-being of children at heart. As one description of its services says, Child Welfare is here to safeguard your child's right to grow up free from abuse or neglect. If you can't meet your child's need to be safe, you should ask Child Welfare for help.

And that is exactly what Lisa did. And by asking for help she set in motion a series of very painful events.

Lisa has asked for help on more than one occasion, most recently in August of 1997. She is not only parenting her five children on her own, but faces a number of other challenges. First, she has had no permanent partner and no family to support her. She has friends - and anyone who spends time with her will testify that's she's a likeable person - but, as she says, "You can't ask your friends to look after your children."

To add to her worries, Lisa's eldest child was diagnosed a few years ago as having Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). Lisa questions that assessment, and one psychiatrist called in by Child Welfare suggests that the boy's behaviour is quite typical of a thirteen year old.

In spite of this positive assessment of her oldest son and her own faith in him, Lisa was told that he should not be allowed to babysit. When she used her own judgment about that, she was charged with not co-operating with her support worker and threatened. If she didn't cooperate, said the representative of Child Welfare, her children would be apprehended.

Lisa also has two children with asthma to worry about. In August of 1997 her family doctor said that if she didn't get some rest she was going to collapse, Lisa was functioning on about three hours of sleep a night. She'd had the baby on an asthma machine every three hours, day and night, for almost a year and four other children to care for.

Under the arrangement Lisa made with Child Welfare Services just a little over a year ago, an aid worker would come and help out until temporary placements for her children could be found. She describes the person who came as a "wonderful woman" who told her she was "doing very well" with her children, though she was obviously under a lot of stress. The "wonderful woman" even wrote a "marvellous" letter to that effect.

Lisa insists that, even though she was exhausted when she asked for help, she never had any intention of giving her children up, though she did sign a temporary guardianship order for the four younger ones. She was promised, she says, that there was no danger of a permanent guardianship order. Now, however, she is being told something different. "I feel they tricked me," says



Lisa. In her words, this is what happened:

"... By late October, I wanted my children back ... since my oldest son was under a custody agreement, they had no choice but to return him to me. [He] came home into my care on November 30, 1997 ... I had to go to court to get [the other children] back. On January 17, 1998, the judge ordered [that] my two middle children ... were to be placed back with me. On the same day ... my Child Welfare worker promised me that my two younger children would be placed back home when I was ready for them."

Things never got that far; instead they got worse. Lisa explains how her middle child came home early from a birthday party because he had an infected eye. Lisa got medication for it, but apparently there was some bruising. Soon after that, on April 29, 1998, the two older children of the children in her custody were apprehended from their Millwoods school, without warning or explanation, and the six year old who'd had what reports called the "injured eye" was taken from his day care.

Since then, Lisa's five children have been placed in three separate foster homes. She is allowed to see them for six hours a week, with supervision.

Lisa was devastated to hear that her two younger children are calling their foster parent "Mommy." She's sure that the longer they are separated from her, the more difficult the adjustment will be. To add to her concern, she says, her second youngest has already been "beaten" in a former foster home.

Now Lisa is building her own case. She has a file full of letters of support and commendation from a day care worker she's known for six years, from neighbours, from teachers, from earlier care workers ... Many of these letters commend her as a parent. The same psychiatrist who assessed her oldest son described his mother as "an intelligent, rational, articulate woman who volunteered information spontaneously."

"If I'm such a bad parent or if I'm abusing my children, wouldn't anyone other than Child Welfare have noticed something?" asks Lisa. When she couldn't get the explanations she needed after her older children were apprehended, Lisa wrote the Minister for Social Services. In his response, Lyle Oberg appears to quote directly from her file. He informs her that she has provided "inappropriate care of the children." She is also accused of "refusal to work with the support services provided and [of creating] ongoing situations where the children were placed at risk." (The last comment seems to be a reference to the fact that she allowed her thirteen-year-old son to babysit.)

Those of us who are parents ask ourselves: "What if it were me? What if I were in Lisa's situation, with no partner or family to turn to? What kind of parent could I be if I had to deal with all those challenges? How would it feel to be under continual surveillance by an institution which had the power to take my children away?" ♦

The Good in God!!

I've never been a religious man. As a matter of fact I've always been pretty cynical about the whole notion of God and Christ and what they are supposed to represent. Like many others I'm sure, I grew up around people who supposedly believed in God and fancied themselves Christians. Mostly however, I saw these folks living in a way that to me was not parallel with what I understood religion and God to stand for. They were supposed to mean good things. It's supposed to be an acceptance of a power that gave us life, that gave us earth and with that acceptance we as people were supposed to cherish our lives and the lives of all other creatures that live among us. We are to be good, decent and helpful human beings and this would leave us in good standing when judgment day came.

Poor naive me. It sure is a lot more complicated and judgemental than that. We all know about holy wars. That's about as oxy-moronic as military intelligence. I've known people who beat their children, who are racist, who would fight their own grandmothers to make a dollar, but yet every Sunday they stand in their church and feel special and destined for the promised land in the eyes of their God simply because they are in church. As well with many different cultures there are different Gods, different paths to eternal salvation, different basic beliefs. Personally it all confuses me a bit and I feel connected to very little of what I understand of it. One of the first conversations I can remember having when I started volunteering in the inner city was with a religious fellow. He asked me "if I believed in Jesus". I told him that I felt that I couldn't. At the time I was feeling pretty good about myself because I was helping the poor with my free time. I felt it was the right thing to be doing. But still according to this guy, I was going to hell. I could do all the good things that I wanted to, but if I didn't accept Christ and give him credit for guiding my choices, I was destined for the burning pits down below. So I figured if I was going to hell, there wasn't much I could do about it. I wasn't too worried.

The more time that I've spent in the inner city the value of God and of faith has shown itself to me. I've seen for the first time in my life the power of God, the meaning of God when there are no materials and deceptions to hide behind. I've seen more than the Sunday God. I've met people and known people who were virtually on their last breath and once they found God, their lives began again. These are people who suffered with severe addictions that they used to cover serious pain and despair. Sure we can argue that now rather than using booze, drugs or violence to cover this pain and despair they are using religion and their problems are still there. But you can't have violent seizures from religion, you won't poison and destroy vital organs with religion, religion doesn't cause you to pass out stone cold in the middle of the winter and freeze to death.

Religion in the inner city doesn't eat your last dime and force you to live on the streets. I've seen the need for life through people's needs to believe, to have purpose. It is empowering for many. We may argue that the notion of God and living life through this notion may be deceiving and an excuse for being weak or we may argue that God is the sole reason for life as we know it. I have my beliefs, which we all do, but I've seen faith in God give people faith in themselves and this has kept a lot of good people alive. ♦

Michael Walters

Editorial OPINION

Our Voice the spare change magazine

Say no to the pusher Who's addiction?

The "pusher" wants to get you addicted. He needs your money to feed his own habit. He'll entice you at first. But when you're hooked, he'll drain you. In Alberta today, the pusher selling addiction on a mass scale happens to be our provincial government. The government is pushing VLTS, highly addictive gambling. It's hooked on the money it can make too, it has a bad habit.

Recently the Alberta Treasurer boosted the estimates of how much they will pull in from VLT gambling this year. It has jumped up to nearly half a billion dollars. That's far more money then it will take in from oil industry royalties. What? Wait a second, more money than from Alberta oil? That's right, the pusher has been lightening up on the take from the big industries, and squeezing hard on its new found cash source: gambling addiction.

VLTS+SUCKERS=\$\$\$
HUHI WHO SAYS I NEED TO
GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL
IN ORDER TO BE GOOD AT MATH...



And it is ugly, like drug addiction, Video Lottery Terminal addiction grinds its victims right to the bottom. This month **Our Voice** went looking for addict stories, and we got so many we couldn't use them all. Lies, denial, begging, borrowing, stealing and finally exhausted desperation are the marks of vicious addiction.

The machines are designed to hook you. There's the rush of winning, the constant involvement of playing, the bells, the whistles, the steady stimulation. They have been

expertly built to be addictive, and they are.

How many stories do we need to hear of broken people, broken families, and suicides? This is the very ugly part of addiction that has fueled the huge government campaigns against drugs. Now we have government as the pusher.

It's time to just say no. The pusher has the lines, about it's everyone's free choice. The pusher can whine and complain, and come down to bullying threats: you won't get those grants. But look where the money is coming from, and you wouldn't want this dirty money.

It's time to say no. No more excuses like "it's before the courts". No more sneaking around putting the addiction in charity casinos. The pusher has to come completely clean when we say no.

On the plebiscite on October 19 just say no to the pusher. Say no to VLTS. ♦

Keith Wiley

Talking Back TELL US WHAT YOU THINK.
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Alienating readers with judgemental attitude

I really enjoyed the "Stolen Life." article by L. Janet Dowling. It was really positive and as well, "I Cried Through The Night." by Trapper. That was a great story. It was well done. One thing I wanted to suggest, with the "Good, the Bad and the Inconvenienced." by Rodney Graham, is that it talks about people being pampered in our society and I think that's true, when you talk about the

healthy middle class people and lump them in all into one category, saying they're selfish, you kind of alienate people who buy your magazine. I'm middle class and I buy your magazine because I care and I think it's unfair to judge people in that way. For example, the woman moving, that the story focuses on, you could find the solution to help her, for example the person with the camera could have helped her move. Does he have a car? There could be a support network for her. I like your magazine generally, but I didn't like the judgemental attitude of that particular article.

Nancy

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The Dinger in Calgary's Mayor's Chair?

Rick Bell takes aim at the
Corporate Kingdom.

BY KIMBERLEY
LANGFORD FLUET

Rick Bell paid for his nomination in loonies and toonies. He raised money by panhandling in front of the Bay and St. Louis and people were invited to drop money into a green bucket. To prove he is a voice for the working class, Bell is operating on a low budget, "Dollars for Dinger!"

Rick "the Dinger" Bell, a Calgary Sun Columnist is running for mayor.

"I am willing to be a strong voice for the people who aren't part of City Hall. My main concern is for the working class individual who works hard to pay the bills," says Rick.

Rick's overall message is that he feels the city's current government does not effectively represent the working class, the majority of Calgary's citizens.

Rick said that when he saw who was running-current mayor Al Duer and Alderman Roy Clarke, he was shocked as both are long term members of council. Since it didn't seem like anyone new was stepping up to the plate, he decided to run in this year's election.

Rick stressed that his biggest concerns include the crumbling infrastructure of the city's roads and that a downtown hospital is being blown up during the campaign. He wonders how much City Hall fought for the hospital and pointed out that there had once been a plan for the children's hospital to be closed, but people fought for it.

The housing crisis is another issue that concerns Bell, as he has seen his own rent increase by 20 per cent over the past six months.

"So far I haven't heard of anyone in City Hall



PHOTO: Jack Cusano.
Courtesy
The Calgary Sun



voicing their concern over these matters," he says.

"In Calgary," Rick explained, "there is a lot of prosperity. However, the city is judged by more than who has the most money, it is also judged by the way the inhabitants treat the less fortunate."

Rick's previously worked as a teacher and as a Legislative reporter for the *Edmonton Sun*. He says that his experience as a reporter has taught him a lot about what people who are less fortunate experience in their daily lives and he has even slept in a drop-in centre.

He says that if he is elected mayor that he will form a citizen's forum "where people and interest groups can come together to express their concerns." He added that when it comes to providing them with solutions he would "give it a damn good shot."

When asked why he'd make a good mayor he said that he has the passion and the heart to do the job right. He added that he has a wide range of life experiences and has a great ease when dealing with all kinds of people. He stressed that he'll be there to help the people when the fur is flying. He quotes his father's favorite saying.

"Always pick friends who'll back you up in a bar-room fight." ♦



Lilith Fair Raises more than \$20,000 for Alberta Women

Sara McLachlan's Lilith Fair tour, which covered fifty-seven cities across North America, raised over \$20,000 dollars on its two Alberta stops. The tour donated one dollar from every ticket to a women's shelter in every city it played in. In Calgary Lilith raised close to \$10,000. The lucky recipient of the money there was the Discovery House, a shelter for women in that city. In Edmonton, WIN House received a cheque for \$11,700. Congratulations to those two organizations and thank you to Sara McLachlan and all the Lilith Fair performers for making a difference in all the communities you touched. ♦

Tooker Gombert gets big reaction in serious campaign

BY TOM MURRAY

The name Tooker Gombert causes an instant reaction. He's the darling of a chunk of the left in Edmonton, mistrusted by some and loved by environmentalists. The Edmonton Sun uses him as an all purpose punch-line for all things "bleeding heart liberal".

When reading about the mayoral race one will discover that the larger media are mostly interested in portraying him as a fringe oddball. They say nothing about his political platforms. Yet in his news releases, he has detailed objectives and stances that cut across all issues important to Edmontonians, and these platforms are quite pragmatic and solid.

Tooker: If people are hearing about what I do through the large corporate media, things are going to be distorted and certain perspectives will be emphasised and others overlooked. When I talk about energy conservation and dealing with the Kyoto accords, people say "oh there goes Tooker on about environment" but the fact of the matter is, when I talk about that I'm saying "why don't we renovate buildings in Edmonton for energy efficiency?" Now I'm talking about job creation in a city where people need jobs.

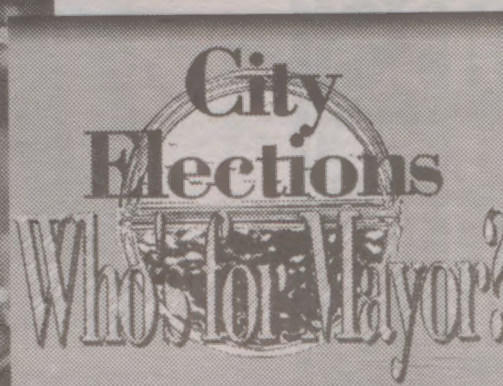
Saving people money on energy bills. While I was on council I talked about the broad range of issues, from transportation, to affordable housing, quality of life. These are all issues everybody talks about.

Our Voice: Your environmental and social focus has made you a target for some...

Tooker: The media often says that to deal with the environmental crisis is going to cost a lot, and is a kind of a frill, but in my experience doing right by the environment actually saves money. One of the best examples is composting. Most of what people throw away can be composted in their back yard or their neighborhood. In this election, we are attempting to get out a progressive sustainable, healthy position on virtually every issue the city faces.

Our Voice: You're often portrayed in the media as being a one issue candidate, and that your ideas are not to be taken seriously.

Tooker: Well, we're into an ecological crisis, there's certainly a financial crisis that's bearing down on us, so this is not the time to be looking backwards for ideas,



but rather to be saying ok, what's been tried in other parts of the world, who have wrestled with these problems of poverty, housing livability, neighborhood integrity, there are examples out there that can be used as models for our cities. When someone reads about it in the Edmonton Sun, it may sound like a wonky idea, but we've

been doing our homework. In my travels in Europe, in Scandinavia, Denmark, Holland, there seemed to be a kind of acceptance of experimentation in society. A tolerance for diversity, which I think is very healthy. A society should not be too rigid, and think that it has all the answers. There seems to be a fear of different approaches.

Our Voice: How about your perceived anti-business bias?

Tooker: I tried, on Council, to get Economic Development Edmonton (EDE) more interested in local community economic development. You can go off somewhere and try to get a branch plant in Edmonton, create a hundred jobs, and that's fine. But when that multi-national company finds somewhere where they can pay someone less, or they can get their electricity cheaper, they'll leave Edmonton in a matter of months. On the other hand, if we focus on supporting the local economy, then you have sustainable, solid economic development for the city. The city could be a facilitator to helping smaller businesses. EDE money goes to the big picture, the big economic development. Smaller stuff gets virtually no attention.

Our Voice: I know that you worked for Inner City Housing, and that inner city issues are important to you. How will your campaign deal with these issues?

Tooker: If people are desperate, and they're impoverished, crime tends to go up. One of the foundations of dealing with the issue of poverty is having a place to live. If you don't have a safe place to live, your life becomes a shambles. If you do have a safe affordable place to live, you can start getting the other aspects of your life together. It seems to me, the mayor should be leading the way to come up with strategies for addressing homelessness. All levels of government are passing the buck around. The problem is getting worse, not better. ♦

Pastor takes a lot in inner city mission

BY TOM HIND

"It was quite a challenge," says Pastor Sedric Vassel about being asked to take over the Mission on 96th Street back in nineteen ninety-four. "When I came aboard, the Mission was not being supported by any churches and we only had a hundred dollars in the bank. It was a very poor situation. Everything was hand to mouth."

The Mission is a place in the inner city for people to come and pray and access various services. There is a residency program for about ten men. They live there and pay for room and board. The rent covers some of the costs of running the Mission. It aims to be a friendly place where people can come and have coffee and visit. There is a clothing room. There are lunch programs. Different ministries come in and offer prayer services as well as food donations. There is a drop-in Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday during the day and on Saturday nights.

"The first major crisis I had to deal with was a broken boiler. Where was I to get the money for a new one and for the labour?" says Vassel. But the Pastor

has surmounted this problem and has turned the running of the Mission around to the point that it now receives support from the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

The pastor has been working with the poor, homeless and prostitutes since 1988. "I was called to this work by God," he says. This bottom lines his agenda.

Born in Jamaica forty-six years ago, the Pastor immigrated to the United States, where he completed his formal schooling and then worked construction for his bread and butter. Several years went by until he was given the "call" to the Pentecostal ministry. The call came in a vivid dream. 'Go and help the poor and the indigent.'

Sedric Vassel has been involved in this community since 1981, when he worked with youths at the Church of God on 93 Street and 115 Avenue.

On September 8th of this year, Pastor Vassel also saw the realization of another dream. The Dream Centre opened; project for girls working the streets who wish to turn their lives around. Vassel raised the start up cost and with volunteer help and goods and

labour, completely renovated the house, which is a residency program for eight women at a time. Currently two women have moved in to the Dream Centre. But the Pastor's vision is to purchase two more houses.


"A few weeks ago, a middle-aged woman dropped by to inquire what the Dream Centre was all about. When I explained that it is a place where women can come to recapture lost dreams of their youth, when their innocence was still intact, the lady with tears in her eyes told me 'I allowed my dreams to die'."

In his own way Vassel is telling street people with major problems that their dreams can be rekindled and made real through God. If only they want to try. ♦



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God, the Streetcleaner

I hear you say God
when the people lay near dead
at my feet
on my street
with cheap beer coated glass ropes
strung around their necks
and I feel torn apart
as they struggle to breathe.

I hear you say God will take them
home-
these homeless drunks
these beautiful people
with ugly lives
-when their eyes close and their lungs
turn to dust.

You say God.
Is he a streetcleaner?

by Marvin Ends.

I am Woman

I am a woman of many cultures
with common bond,
to be known equal
and to not be played upon.

I am a women of equal status
and have a voice that sounds
out strong.
Who can stand up and speak
for herself
and who knows right from
wrong.

I am a woman who stands
beside the other half
and is proud of who she is
and proud to lend a hand in
mending our failing world
and not to lay burden on only
him.

I am a woman in this world
along with you
and I have the right to be treat-
ed with respect
and we can conquer the prob-
lems of this world together
if we share our intellect.

I am a woman in a world along
with man
and it is my right not to stutter
or be mute.
I am equal in power and
authority.
I am made equal by the hands
of God.

by Sherlyn Gajewski



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Goyette's book, a cheerful finger pointer

SECOND OPINION, the best of Linda Goyette published in Edmonton by Rowan Books.

The tough reporter hears about a grave injustice, plonks a hat on his head and, with a gleam in his eye, heads out to uncover the truth and right the wrongs. Many journalists still carry this old stereotype around in their heads, although the reality of reporting is a far cry from it. With a phone stuck to your ear, you listen to the voices of government and business and their paid "spinners", feeding you the story. It's what's expected of you, and all you have time for, to meet the deadline.

Lucky Linda Goyette of the Edmonton Journal gets to use the freedom of her regular column in the daily paper to go out and crusade, just like every junior reporter would love to do. Now she has published a collection of these hard-bitten columns in a new book, *Second Opinion, the best of Linda Goyette*. Pulled from the last few years, Goyette's attention in these columns covers many issues, what riled her at the time. The book groups them into loose categories, Justice, Alberta Politics, Work, Women... and so on.

Goyette plays no favourites, and is afraid of no one. She takes them on. Ralph Klein's talk to a very fancy Salvation Army fundraising lunch gets called "crap". But very politely, by a former Sally Ann volunteer, "Pardon me for being vulgar".

"Klein offered his paint-by-numbers deficit speech with a few whacks at the poor," Goyette wrote. And she noted there were no poor people there to defend themselves, either, so loyally, Goyette took up the task. "Two thirds of Edmonton food bank users are on social assistance. People turn to Alberta food banks at twice the Canadian rate."

And what do they get to eat? In the same column where she's reporting on Klein's talk at an elegant hotel dining room, Goyette snoops in a typical food bank hamper: "Family of three: One parsnip. One celery bunch. Three loaves of white bread. A half-dozen tins of soup and beans and tuna. Onions. Four bananas. Some potatoes. A withered pepper. Some eggs. No coffee or tea. No sugar. No fresh milk or dairy products."

Goyette's style is a homey, kitchen-table sort of story-telling, with lots of regular people showing up to have their say. But she packs a punch too, and isn't shy about hauling out some numbers or salient facts to back herself up.

In fact, Goyette's columns are so full of relevant information the book becomes like a social history textbook, a snapshot of Alberta in the 90s. It becomes clear that research, relentless digging, is the backbone of Goyette's writing, like any tough reporter.

Asking why Edmonton's hog plant workers should have to work for North Carolina wages leads Goyette into a whole exploration of "the taboo question" of how much people make. Stock brokers got an average 62 per cent increase since 1990. Advertising agency people got 20 per cent. "And, "Chief executive officers of Canadian companies earned an average \$733,000 in 1996, up 11 per cent in a single year... Down here on planet Earth, the average Canadian worker earns \$604 a week, or roughly \$32,000 a year."

For every Albertan who has gotten mad hearing some narrow-minded public opinion, Linda Goyette's book is a treat. She is there to point fingers right back at them, forcefully, and with lots of facts to back it up. ♦

Keith Wiley



Help Send up to 25 people to the 1998 Western Canadian Poor People's Conference.

October 17

The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

The Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry, along with various local activists and other community organizations, is coordinating the Western Canadian Poor People's Conference. More than just an organization or individual, we are part of a growing global community of people questioning poverty and searching for solutions.

There is a community of poor people, though it is often difficult to see. This conference will help people to network and communicate with others about the issues that affect us everyday. There is power in that communication and there is hope in the realization of that power.

We should be concerned with meeting the basic needs of individuals, helping people one at a time. Unfortunately, helping one person out of

a situation of poverty does not eliminate the problem of poverty altogether. In our wealthy country, poverty is unacceptable in any situation.

Poverty in Action which has just opened its new office at 10874-97 Street is trying to raise money to send people who live and work in Edmonton's poverty community to the conference in Regina. **Our Voice** along with Poverty In Action is asking for donations to help pay for the costs of travel, accommodations and child-care expenses for those members of the poverty community who could benefit from what the conference in Regina has to offer. ♦

If you are able to assist us at all please call Midge Cuthill at 990-1840 or 990-1842 or Michael Walters at 428-4001.

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JOHN'S STYLE FILE

ANGELA

*John Zapantis
Our Voice vendor, writer and
photographer meets the most
interesting people.*

Angela Jones is one tiny fiddler whose talent is bigger than her size. She has been busking since April of 1998.

"Busking has improved my abilities to perform in front of people. I've become a lot less shy. I've actually found it's a lot easier to play in front of strangers than it is in front of people I know," says Angela.

Angela talks about the motivation of her mother's influence. Her mother also had talent and passion for the fiddle.

"It's encouraging to play my fiddle in front of people because you get to see their reactions. Some people just walk by and others

stop and talk and even request things," Angela said.

You can find Angela and her fiddle on 101 Street and 102 Avenue in Edmonton.

Our Voice asked Angela, "If you had the opportunity of sharing the spotlight in concert with your favorite musician, who would it be?"

"I'd like to play with Sinead O'Connor if that was possible," was Angela's reply. ♦



Our Voice vendor gets panhandler off the street

BY JOHN ZAPANTIS

Kirk Purcell had been sleeping homeless in the river valley. He was struggling to pay off a series of fines totalling \$800. He was panhandling on Edmonton's Jasper Avenue when he met **Our Voice** vendor George Descheneaux.

Kirk and George respected each other as they worked their trades along the busy Edmonton street. They got to know each other over a cup of coffee and this is where George learned of Kirk's plight. Understanding Kirk's circumstances, George agreed to let him stay at

his place until he was back together again.

George also suggested that Kirk start selling **Our Voice**, in order to pay off his debts and to get back on his feet. Kirk pursued the challenge and is successfully selling **Our Voice**.

"I learned that by not being afraid to help other people, you can give them a chance to get their dignity back," says George.

"He's helped me out quite a bit, cause I was sleeping down in the valley. George pulled me off the street when I needed it the most. He's been nothing but good to me," says a grateful Kirk.

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IN EDMONTON

Roxanne Descheneaux

BY JOHN ZAPANTIS

Roxanne has been selling *Our Voice* off and on since 1996.

She relies on *Our Voice* for income and for her it is a forum to interact with people.

"I need the extra money, because sometimes I don't have any and I like to meet new people," says Roxanne. "It makes me feel like I've accomplished something. I'm not just sitting around and expecting a handout."

Roxanne can be found selling on 101 Street and Jasper Ave on the SW corner in front of the blue bank. ♦



IN CALGARY

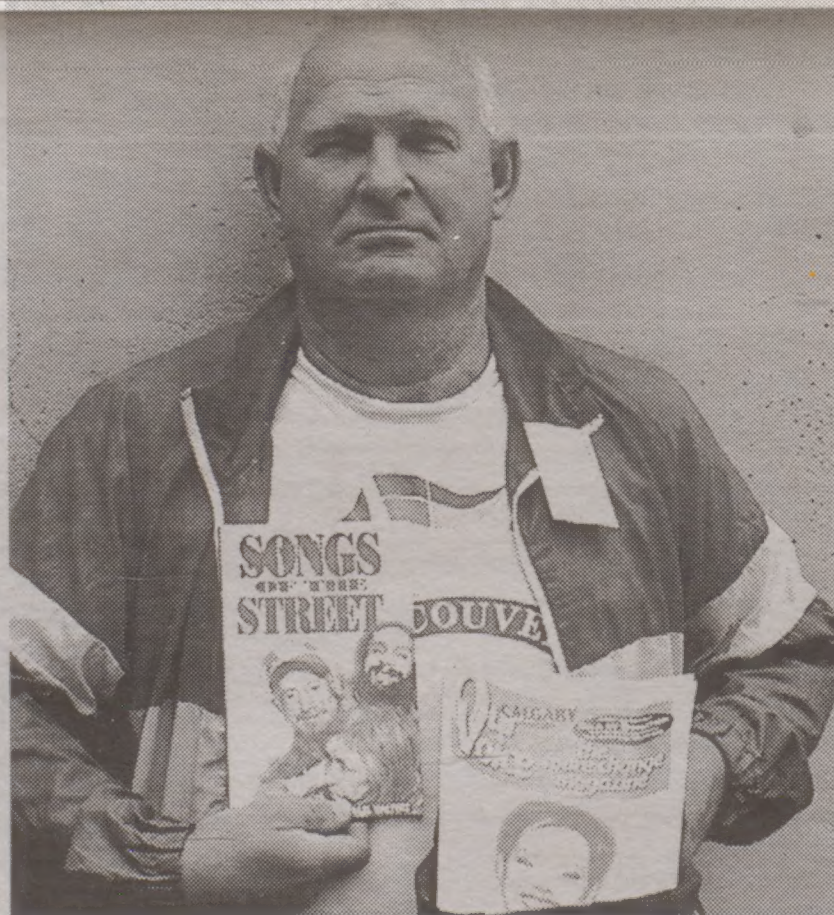
Wayne

Wayne has been selling *Our Voice* for two months now.

"I was panhandling for the eight months before that and I've gotten a much better response from this program. I get more respect from the public," says Wayne.

"I enjoy selling the magazine. I find it interesting and I like the people who I encounter," he says.

You can find Wayne selling on 8th Street, under the 9th Street bridge. ♦



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All he cared about was his family

Sandra's husband got hooked on VLTs and stayed hooked until he died. "He was the kind of guy that made sure he had 25,000 dollars invested in our child's education before we could even consider having a child. He worked hard to buy a cabin at a lake outside of the city so we'd have a place to get away with the family," Sandra told **Our Voice**.

"All he cared about was his family. Six months after our daughter was born he went to a bar with some of his friends and he played the VLTs for the first time. The next thing I knew two years later he told me that all the money we put into our daughter's future was gone, he'd sold the cabin, maxed out all of our credit cards. Manipulated ten grand from his friends. He had turned from the reliable, family man that I married into a liar and VLT addict. He spent close to a hundred thousand dollars on those machines. He committed suicide just after our daughter's third birthday," she said.

Income from Video Lottery Terminals, according to the Alberta Liquor and Gaming Commission, is projected for 1998-99 to be 70 percent of \$767 million. So approximately \$500 million of the total Alberta Government's lottery revenues for the current fiscal year will come from VLT machines.

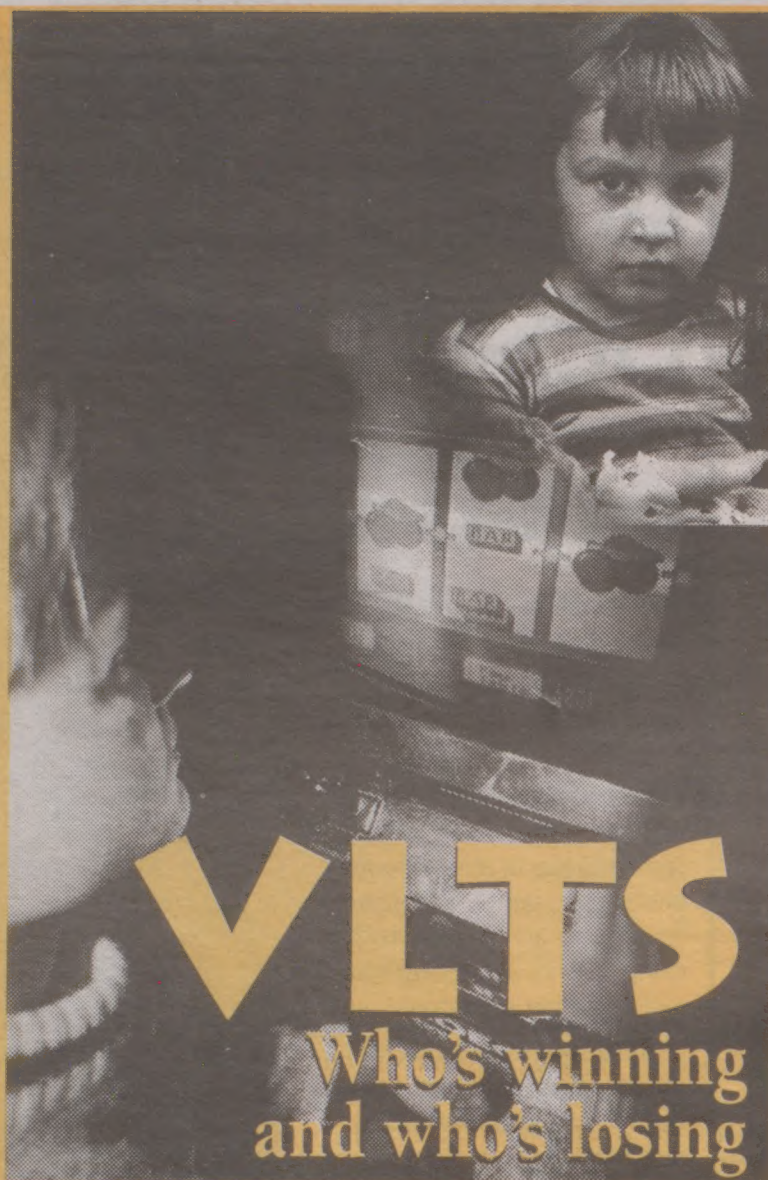
"VLTs are not a reasonable form of gambling. Since VLTs were introduced to the province, calls to the Gamblers Anonymous Hot line have increased by 25 percent every year. 65 percent of the calls to the hot line are VLT related," says Vic Justic from the Canadian Foundation for Compulsive Gambling which claims to not be an anti-gambling organization.

Justic, who now works counseling those who suffer with gambling addictions, at one time could not resist the allure of VLTs himself. He would spend up to \$1500 a day; money he was stealing from his own business.

"There are so many disastrous situations. Gambling is an emotional disease. It tears families apart. It harms children. We do workshops in schools to educate kids about the risks of gambling, to help kids deal with their own personal issues related to gambling. I've had a girl come up to me and tell me her mom steals her paper route money. She doesn't know what to do."

"The number of problem gamblers is down in Alberta since 1994 from 5.4 percent of the population to 4.8 percent of the population. This comes straight from the AADAC report released back in June," says Denton Robinson, a spokesperson for the Hospitality Industry, which is campaigning to keep VLTs. "Gambling is an entertainment business. So if only 5 percent of the population has a problem with it, the other 95 percent have to suffer and have a form of entertainment in their lives taken away. It's not right. Taking away the VLTs won't stop people from gambling. They'll just find another way to do it."

The AADAC report is the one referred to by everyone. That report discovered that problem gambling has decreased in the last four years. But there was a rise in what is known as the "problem pathological gambler", the gambler whose addiction can be called a psychological disorder. This type of gambler in Alberta, according to AADAC, rose from 1.4 percent to 2.0 percent. A small percentage, but it translates into roughly 60,000 Albertans who are "problem



BY MICHAEL WALTERS

pathological gamblers". Another 150,000 people are "problem gamblers" for an approximate total of 210,000 Albertans with serious gambling habits. Consistently one study after another shows that 40 percent of the province's gambling revenue comes from this small part of the population. Other reports suggest that 65 percent of these gambling addictions are VLT related.

Gambling is one of the most silent and hidden of all addictions. And because denial is one of the primary conditions of a gambling problem, there is, in all likelihood, even a far greater number of people in Alberta who suffer from this disease.

So, what is the allure of the VLTs?

"They are mesmerizing. They give you such a thrill. Everything about them," says Betty L. who found new life in the machines after her parents were killed in a car accident more than three years ago. "I was down after my parents death and they brought me back up. The first two times I played them I won more than fifteen hundred bucks. That was the last time I won and I only went down again from there. I became absolutely controlled by them. I would be there waiting for the bar to open at ten in the morning and I would play until I had to go home and make my husband supper and then I would sneak out after he was asleep and play them until 3:30 in the morning. Eventually I wouldn't go home at all. I would play them and smoke for fourteen hours straight. The machines were my life. I didn't care what I looked like. I didn't eat or shower. I became a great liar," Betty goes on. Betty tried to hang herself the day after her 50th birthday. "I felt so worthless. I would say that I wasn't going to go and play them, but ten minutes later I was out the door. I pawned anything I could. I spent thirty thousand dollars of an inheritance I got from my parents. I had no choice. Fortunately the support of my husband and kids got me away." Betty has been clean now since February of 1997. "I've never had a problem with

gambling until I saw a VLT."

"It's a big business being earned on the backs of a very small and vulnerable part of the population," argues one psychologist who counsels gamblers. "VLTs are the distilled essence of gambling. They are designed differently than other forms of gambling. They give an immediate gratification that other forms of gambling lack. They rid a player of all external stimuli. They get lost in them. The senses become hostage to the machines."

VLT manufacturers agree completely. "The machines that we build are designed to play on the senses," says a spokesperson from Video Lottery Consultants Incorporated in Montana, the company that manufactures many of the machines used in Alberta. "It's about touch and sounds and the visuals. The machines are designed to stimulate these senses, to hook people. That's what this business is about. Just like any other business, the gambling business needs to come up with new exciting ways to make us stronger and more sustainable. Most casinos are going away from more old fashioned traditional forms of gambling and going to video lottery because it's more scientific. They keep the individual interested and interest people who may otherwise not be interested in gambling."

The bar and hotel owners, along with the government, are the people making the money from VLTs. As Denton Robinson, who owns the Franklin Inn in Sherwood Park says: "The last thing I want on my conscience is for people to suffer." He says it's like drinking. "I don't want

people to come into my bar and spend all their hard-earned money on VLTs, just like I don't want them to come in and drink so much then walk outside and get run over, but people have to be accountable for their actions," he says. "The more money we make from VLTs, the more we can give back to the community. People will suffer if we don't have the revenue that is created by the machines. Charities and the needy will be affected in a negative way."

"The government has always said that they will abide by whatever decision comes from whatever plebiscite," says David Bray from the premier's communications office. "We never planned to use lottery money for core services. It is aimed at more non-essential services like charities and non-profit groups."

"It's a real shame that this is being held over our heads," says the head of a non-profit agency that helps street kids in Calgary. "Our work is now being threatened simply because the people who are making all the money from VLTs are being threatened by a concern about the well-being of our communities and that families and lives are being destroyed."

Wayne, an electrician who now works temporary jobs told **Our Voice**: "I've lost my job, my wife. I stole money from my kids just last week to play the VLTs. I have a serious problem to overcome. I've gambled at the racetrack, played sports select, but never did I feel like I needed to do it. Not until the VLTs," says Wayne. "In order for me to overcome my addiction I've been looking at the big picture. I ask why is gambling such an accepted part of our lives. It's so accessible. I walk out my front door in any direction and in two minutes I can find a VLT. They're everywhere. If they weren't so accessible, I believe not as many people would be addicted. It wouldn't have such a negative effect on our society. But the government put them there so it's okay. Well, if the government made crack or heroin legal would that be okay too? I wonder." ♦